

BUFFALO CHIP

Vol. IV, No. 1: Winter Issue

THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING

Buffalo Chip is a publication of the Omaha Justice Committee, which focuses on human rights and justice issues, especially as they relate to U.S. Political Prisoners -- and most especially as they affect Nebraskans. Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa remain in prison, for a crime which they consistently deny having committed.

If theirs were an isolated case, one could perhaps maintain skepticism about their claims. But the evidence is piling up that, as Bonnie Kerness asserts in her piece on torture, over one hundred people in U.S. prisons fit the internationally accepted definition of the term "Political Prisoner." Ed and Mondo are two of those people.

The jails are filled to bursting, and we're spending our education money on building new ones, keeping people in jails for longer and longer terms for lesser and lesser crimes.

Thomas Jefferson said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, but we choose bread and circuses instead of vigilance. One more quote: Beyond this point there be dragons.

DEATH IN NEBRASKA

Attorneys for NE death row inmate Randy Reeves went before the Pardons Board to appeal for a clemency hearing, just days before his scheduled execution in January. The appeal was denied, with only Secretary of State Scott Moore voting for a hearing. Unhappily, Moore later voted with Gov. Mike Johanns and Attorney General Don Stenberg to approve the execution date; his support of *pro forma* hearings for the condemned seem to be just that: *pro forma*.

However, the day following the Pardons Board meeting -- and less than 48 hours before the scheduled execution -- the Nebraska Supreme Court issued a stay of execution, to consider arguments that Reeves' constitutional guarantee of equal protection had been violated (Nebraska voters amended the State Constitution in the November elections, to formalize an equal protection guarantee).

So Randy Reeves remains on death row, and it would seem that Mike Johanns, Don Stenberg and Scott Moore will continue to refuse to adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Mike Johanns, Don Stenberg and Scott Moore will also continue to ignore the recommendation of the American Bar Association that there be a moratorium on imposition of the death penalty until the fairness of its imposition can be established.

It would seem that the only circumstances which will move Mike Johanns, Don Stenberg and Scott Moore to reconsider their position on the legitimacy of the death penalty, or to reconsider the very purpose and function for which the Pardons Board was created, will be when Nebraskans join other human rights activists in demand-

(cont. on p. 8)

THE U.S. BEFORE THE WORLD TRIBUNAL

The idea of presenting evidence of U.S. human rights abuses to the international arena has been gaining momentum -- and it begins to look as though the world is finally ready to pay attention.

U.S. human rights activists Angela Davis, Ramona Africa and Bobby Castillo met with the European Parliament in Strasbourg in December, to present evidence about Political Prisoners and about the death penalty in the U.S. The response was heartening: on December 17, the European Parliament passed a resolution covering a wide range of human rights issues throughout the world, and the language regarding U.S. abuses was very strong.

There are eleven specific recommendations in the resolution, including one calling for worldwide abolition of the death penalty, and an immediate moratorium on its use. Furthermore, the Parliament recommended that European member governments refuse extradition of individuals to countries which still impose the death penalty, if the individual could be in jeopardy of being so charged.

The Parliament has also issued a request for an economic boycott of tourism, goods and services in "killing states" in the U.S.

Regarding specific cases in the U.S., the resolution called for an urgent appeal to the Governor of Pennsylvania to prevent the execution of Mumia Abu Jamal; and to the Supreme Court of Florida both to annul the death sentence passed on Spanish national Joaquin Jose Martinez, and to guarantee his right to a new trial

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MONDO AND ED AND THE JERICHO MOVEMENT

by Tekla Johnson and Mary Dickinson

As many of you know, Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter, former members of the Black Panther Party, have been in prison in Nebraska for 28 years. The events surrounding their conviction and continued incarceration are frighteningly similar to the cases of other activists in prisons across the country. Political Prisoners were either members of the Black Panther Party, AIM (American Indian Movement, Latino Independence Front, or anti-war groups. Usually they were in leadership positions.

Most have been in prison since 1969 or 1970, but a few members of the Afrikan Liberation Front were arrested in the late 1980's and even 1990's. Many are accused of shooting police officers, killing police officers, or conspiracy to kill police officers (the beauty of this charge from a public relations point of view is that people fear anarchy, and especially fear African males who aren't intimidated by police -- part of this country's racist psychology). Further, many of the activists were set up by an agent provocateur (police officer undercover, or frightened activist conforming to agent requests). Most had inflammatory literature presented at their trials. Most have hundreds of pages of FBI files (obtainable for a fee under the Freedom of Information Act). Most of their files predate any criminal charges. Most political prisoners -- but not all-- are transferred away from supportive relatives and activists. Most spend some time in the hole. Most agitate while in prison, and try to organize to the degree they can. Most never receive a pardon or parole. Most states seem determined to see them die in prison. Most of us owe them for risking their lives on our behalf. There is a national network growing across the country to help such incarcerated leadership. It is called the Jericho Network.

In December, Herman Ferguson, formerly a political prisoner in New York state, came to Nebraska to speak at the Third Annual Human Rights Day, which was attended by over 350 people. Lennox Hinds, an international attorney for human rights, delivered the keynote address -- an historical overview of human rights abuses by the U.S. government on indigenous and African people. The five workshops addressed the issues of Political Prisoners, Racism and Human Rights Education.

Over 100 people attended a rally held outside the Nebraska State Penitentiary, where they heard speeches by freed Political Prisoner Herman Ferguson and human rights advocate Bobby Castillo. Ferguson said that Mondo and Ed are in prison because they spoke out against injustice. "The U.S. government has to admit it holds Political Prisoners," he said. He also urged that advocates for Political Prisoners make these cases public in the international arena, to force the U.S. to acknowledge the issue. Castillo, who spent 14 years inside a

(cont. on p. 6)

MONDO ON REEVES

by Mondo we Langa

As an African in this country, I know what it is to be away from home, to be a descendant of people who had been kidnapped from their homeland to be held in bondage in this foreign place. I know what it is to neither know the language(s) of my ancestors or know which language it is, to have no first-hand knowledge of the traditions of the ethnic group I am descended from. I know what it is to live under the rule of those whose foreparents enslaved, whipped, raped, and lynched mine. I know these things.

But not being indigenous to this land, not being a so-called "Indian," I don't know what it is to be forced to live in the margins of my own home, to be dealt with as an alien in the land inhabited first by my ancestors. I don't know what it feels like to turn on the television and see my people and their cultures mocked by thousands of sports fans, cheering teams called "redskins," "indians," "chiefs," or other such names, and doing "tomahawk chops," "war whoops," etc.

Not being Randy Reeves, I don't know what it feels like to have been raised by parents who, however decent they may have been, were descended from the people who stole the land of my ancestors and, in the process, came close to exterminating them. Not being Randy Reeves, I don't know how it feels to be a member of a group that has suffered near annihilation, and had its homeland taken by force by those who felt they had a god-given right, owing to their paleness of skin, to do so, and yet is ignored or is given the status of an afterthought when U.S. politicians decide to have grand conferences on race and racism. Not being Randy Reeves, I don't know what it is to be caught in the dreadful irony of having killed while under the fiery influence of alcohol introduced to my people by the same ones who now sit in judgment over me for my act of killing.

But I don't have to be an indigenous person, I don't have to be Randy Reeves, to be able to discern the callousness and arrogance on the faces of Johanns and Stenberg as they, today, denied Randy even so much as a hearing to determine if his death sentence should be commuted. I can readily imagine the same look on the faces of those who, more than a hundred years ago, ordered the slaughter at Wounded Knee, oversaw the distribution of smallpox-infected blankets to the indigenous peoples, and committed other vile acts under the "authority" of their "manifest destiny."



WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS US

The following pieces were gathered from Sis Marpessa, FrontlineNewsService, AfrikanNewsNet, CERJ, etc. The subject is the emerging military/police/prison/industrial convergence, whose development seems to be accelerating (though you'd never guess it if you followed conventional news sources). Buffalo Chip is grateful to all those whose work and generosity helps to keep the public informed.

YOUR TAX \$ AT WORK

Excerpts from a dispatch by Christian Parenti

SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN, 11/18/98.

Just before dawn on Oct. 30, 90 law-enforcement officers wearing black masks and fatigues and armed with assault rifles stormed the Martin Luther King Jr./Marcus Garvey Cooperative in the Western Addition. They used special "shock-lock" shotgun rounds to blow apartment doors off their hinges and cleared people out of rooms by throwing "flash-bang grenades," which produce nonlethal explosions that terrify and disorient people.

At a Nov. 4 police commission meeting, a train of furious and sobbing residents from the housing complex -- all of them African-American -- described how officers slapped them, stepped on their necks and put guns to their heads while other officers ransacked their homes. Weeping and terrified children, some as young as six, were handcuffed and separated from their parents. Some urinated in their pajamas. (Police chief Fred Lau told the San Francisco Chronicle that the officers wanted to keep the kids from "running around.")

Residents of the complex say the raid was a violation of their civil rights. Scores of people with no charges against them and no criminal records were put in disposable plastic "flexcuffs." Civil servants and grandmothers were held at gunpoint. One woman was hospitalized after a fit of seizures; other people were so distraught they couldn't return to work for days ...

The squad that raided the housing complex included agents from the San Francisco Police Department's tactical squad and narcotics division, the District Attorney's office, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. According to SFPD narcotics Lt. Kitt Crenshaw, who initiated and planned the operation, the action was designed "to put fear in the hearts" of a gang called the Knock Out Posse. "The raid went off, more or less, without a hitch," Crenshaw said. "I feel bad for the innocent women and children that were there, but in a way they do bear some responsibility for harboring drug dealers."

Agents made 11 arrests and netted a pound of what Crenshaw described as "high-grade" marijuana, almost 4 ounces of crack cocaine, 7 pistols and \$4,000 cash. Residents say the money was not drug lucre, that it had been collected to help pay for the funeral of Germain Brown, a recently deceased friend. Thanks to state and federal asset forfeiture laws, the SFPD may get to keep and spend 80% of the seized money.

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NATIONAL GUARD AND Y2K

By David M. Bresnahan, (WorldNetDaily.com)

The National Guard is planning its first national mobilization of troops since 1940 in preparation for civil unrest resulting from the Y2K millennium bug, *WorldNetDaily* has learned.

The National Guard Bureau in Washington is formulating plans for a mobilization test, in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA --the guys who are maintaining "abandoned" prison camps from WWII.] If Y2K causes a communications shutdown, the Guard will need a way to mobilize troops, according to several officers who believe their careers would be at risk if their names were made public...

The plan as it is now being designed, will be a mock mobilization of all 480,000 members of the National Guard in all 54 states and territories. Exercise COMEX/MOBEX will be conducted without telephone, radio or television to get the word to all guard members...

WorldNetDaily spoke with several full-time guard members who work at the national level. Each is an officer, and each is concerned that the public is not being properly informed of the extent and seriousness of problems -- including civil liberties issues -- associated with the Y2K computer bug...

[One] officer pointed out that "the Canadians are way ahead on this. They've already told their folks..."

WorldNetDaily has also learned that all military and civilian federal employees are scheduled to be paid differently in December 1999. Payroll for January 2000 will be paid a month early. One of the officers says that is to place guard members in a situation where they cannot refuse duty in the Y2K crisis because they will have already paid in advance...

The logistics of such a mobilization are significant. The Clinton administration will argue that the National Guard can be used as a national police force, in spite of the Posse Comitatus Act. FEMA and other federal agencies will also be involved...Plans include imposing restrictions on civilian travel and limits on bank withdrawals, according to sources.

"I have no doubts about the bunker mentality of the Clinton administration," said one of the officers. "Let's put it this way: our civil rights are going to take a nosedive."

Bresnahan is the author of "Cover Up: The Art and Science of Political Deception," and offers a monthly newsletter "Talk USA Investigative Reports." His website is at <http://talkusa.com>



IF YOU THINK IT'S BAD OUT HERE... TORTURE IN U.S. PRISONS

Statement by Bonnie Kerness, Director of the Criminal Justice Program of the American Friends Service Committee, Newark, NJ, to the World Organization Against Torture, 11/12/98

I have been a human rights advocate on behalf of prisoners in the U.S. for the past 22 years. I'd like to share with you some of the voices that I hear during my day.

This is from a letter by a social worker at Utah State Prison who writes, "Yocham was directed to leave the strip cell and a urine soaked pillow case was placed over his head like a hood. He was walked, shackled and hooded, to a different cell where he was placed in a device called 'the chair' ...he was kept in the chair for over 30 hours resulting in extreme physical and emotional suffering."

Another writes on behalf of Scotty Lees in Arizona, who describes him being placed in a restraint chair. He was stripped naked and placed in the chair with his buttocks several inches below his knees. His arms and legs were cuffed and shackled to the legs of the chair to prevent him from moving. The design of the chair forces the inmates back against the chair. He was left uncovered and unprotected, in pain, for over 24 hours. Mobility was non-existent. He couldn't relieve himself without soiling himself.

Another from Arizona notes, "during the struggle, jailers shocked Norberg multiple times with stun guns. Inmates who witnessed his death estimated that he was shocked between eight and twenty times. The medical examiner put it at 22 times..."

From Texas, "I was sprayed with so much gas that I lost consciousness. Then I was chained to a metal bed with no clothes in a cell blowing cold air. I was kept naked this way for 8 or more hours."

From Delaware, "I was sprayed starting from the left side of my face to the right side and back again. I was blind for about 15 minutes. Another kind of spray caused me to vomit. I was told that prisoners 30 feet away began to vomit."

From Utah, "I was sprayed with pepper spray and it was 10 hours before I was allowed to wash. This resulted in burns and blisters to my arms, face, chest and feet. For the entire 10 hours I felt like I was being boiled alive. When you are forced to stand in the sun with no shelter, the sweat from your body continues to reactivate this chemical agent so that you remain in extreme pain."

Some of the most poignant letters are from prisoners writing on behalf of mentally ill prisoners -- like the man in California who had spread feces over his body. The guards' response to this was to put him in a bath so hot it boiled 30% of his skin off his body. Or the letters I received on behalf of Frank Hunter in a New Jersey isolation unit, who was tortured to death. The guards

would make Frank perform sexual acts on himself in order for him to get food.

These past two or three years have been full of hundreds and hundreds of letters, calls and complaints of an increasingly disturbing nature from prisoners throughout the United States. Most describe inhumane conditions, including cold, filth, extended isolation, use of devices of torture, harassment and brutality.

I receive descriptions of four point restraints, restraint hoods, restraint belts, restraint beds, stun grenades, tethers, waist and leg chains. The self reports of the deteriorating mental health of those kept in extended isolation are also very disturbing. In New Jersey, prisoner Ojore Lutalo has been held in the Management Control Unit in total isolation since February 4, 1986. He has never received any charges or explanation for this. He is let out for an hour and a half every other day.

In California, Ruchell Magee spent over 21 years in solitary confinement. Couple all of this with sexual abuse, people dying under privatized medical care and shocking treatment of people being held in INS detention centers and you have an excellent picture of the real criminal justice system in the United States.

Twenty-two years ago, if you had interviewed me I would have fought any notion of torture in the United States. I would have fought the notion of U.S. political prisoners. I would also have fought the notion of a prison system which looks suspiciously like the system of slavery when one studies it in any depth.

I've read the United Nations definition of political prisoners, and I have read the history of some of the prisoners that I have met. I was stunned to discover that the United Nations definition fits about one hundred U.S. prisoners. I have read the Convention Against Torture, and then I read my mail. It causes me pain to say that the United States uses devices of torture with impunity. And it's much the same with the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). There is no way to look into any aspect of prison or the wider criminal justice system in the United States without being slapped in the face with the racism and white supremacy that prisoners of color endure. There is often little hesitation on the part of the Department of Corrections to acknowledge that certain prisons are run by guards who are Klan members.

Sadly, human rights violations go even further. I've had ample evidence of being under surveillance. I've had a client picked up by the Essex County Sheriff's Department in Newark coming out of my office and questioned about me. I've also been named as a subversive by the California Department of Corrections. Even advocating on behalf of prisoners is suspect to government agencies.

So, for someone like me, the potential of an international arena for these issues looms as an extraordinary gift. I've come to believe there is torture in the

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TO BE READ FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A HEALTHY PARANOIA

This is a selection from a list of U.S. government camp facilities provided by the Afrikan.net News Service (www.afrikan.net). Space does not permit a complete listing, but it's extensive.

ALABAMA

Opelika -- WWII German/Italian POW camp now being renovated.

ARIZONA

Ft. Huachua -- 20 miles from the Mexican border, 30 miles from Nogales. Rex 84 program Emergency Custodial Facility.

Florence -- WWII German/Italian POW camp being renovated.

Pinal County Gila River -- Renovated WWII Japanese-American special internment detention facility.

Yuma County Colorado River -- Renovated WWII Japanese-American special internment detention facility.

ARKANSAS

Ft. Chaffee -- has a new runway for aircraft, new detention camp facilities with a capacity for 20,000.

Blythville AFB -- This base was closed but new wooden barracks have been constructed. The site is surrounded by high wire topped with barb wire, and has guard towers.

GEORGIA

Facilities with no staff and no prisoners:

Camilla, Mitchell County -- from Camilla take highway 19 south 15.4 miles from 37/19 junction to Mount Zion Road. Turn left (east) on Mount Zion Road. The FEMA facility is located approx. 5.7 miles south of Carmilla.

Oglethorpe, Macon County -- facility is 5 miles from Montezuma, 3 miles from Oglethorp. Traveling south on highway 49, located on the west side of the highway.

Facilities with no prisoners, but manned and staffed:

Unadilla, Macon County -- Located on east railroad street, Plunket road leads into the facility 1 1/2 miles from Unadilla on county road 230. This is a FEMA prison.

Morgan, Calhoun County - I-75 exit 32 to 300 south to Albany. Take highway 234 to Morgan; go through Morgan taking highway 45 south. The FEMA facility is 1 1/2 miles on the right (west) side of highway 45.



NOTE: Sen. David Landis of Lincoln has introduced LB 391, which would allow defense attorneys to raise the general statistical pattern of racial disparity in individual death penalty cases. Six of the 20 persons (30%) sentenced to death in Nebraska since 1980 were nonwhite. Nonwhites make up less than 10 percent of the state's population. YOU DO THE MATH AND CALL YOUR STATE SENATOR ABOUT THIS BILL.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENT IN LINCOLN

Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church is hosting a Black History month program, entitled "Reviewing Living History." It will take a look at the lives of

Ed Poindexter
and

Mondo we Langa

Nebraska's two Political Prisoners now serving their twenty-eighth year in prison.

Ms. Andre Rawls, JD, of Chicago, IL, former member of the Black Panther Party, and friend of Poindexter and Mondo during their affiliation with the BPP, will be guest speaker.

WHERE: Quinn Chapel
9th & C Streets
Lincoln, NE

WHEN: Sunday, Feb. 21
at 5 PM

DON'T GIVE UP ON THE NEBRASKA PARDONS BOARD! PLEASE DO YOUR PART

Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter are Nebraska's Political Prisoners. As victims of COINTELPRO, they are now serving their twenty-eighth year in prison, in spite of evidence obtained through the Freedom of Information Act that Omaha police and the FBI colluded to withhold crucial evidence at the trial.

Write to the Nebraska Board of Pardons, and ask that they hold hearings, listen to the evidence, and commute the sentences of Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa to time served.

Secretary of State Scott Moore has shown some indication that his mind is not closed on human rights abuse issues, and Gov. Johanns is new to the office. Perhaps they can be persuaded that the world is beginning to pay attention to U.S. human rights abuses.

Write to:

Governor Mike Johanns

Attorney General Don Stenberg

Secretary of State Scott Moore

All at -- Nebraska Board of Pardons, State Capitol,
Lincoln, NE 68509



U.S. BEFORE WORLD TRIBUNAL (cont. from p. 1)
 (Before abusing the rights of a Spanish national, the U.S. should take note that it was a judge in Spain who ordered the extradition of Chile's General Pinochet, to be tried for the murder of Spaniards during his odious regime -- and the British House of Lords voted to extradite him. At this rate, travel by U.S. elected officials may soon be limited to governors of states without the death penalty).

Finally, the Parliament instructed its President to forward the resolutions to the European Commission, the Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and the parliaments and governments of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Iran and the People's Republic of China -- these being the other rogue states of the world -- to inform them that this action has been taken.

CANADA. The Canadian Coalition Against the

JACKSONVILLE, FLA. 11/17/98 -- A police review board has decided a Jacksonville cop was acting within department guidelines when he doused a 70-year-old man with pepper spray and slammed him to the ground. The Sheriff's Office Use of Force Board voted unanimously that Officer David Anderson used appropriate force when arresting Artansel Macon. Macon had just crashed into three cars during rush-hour traffic. The board recommended that the sheriff take no action against the officer. Macon says he was in diabetic shock and was not trying to resist arrest. *"O bitter ending!... And it's old and old it's sad and old it's sad and weary ..."*

James Joyce, Finnegan's Wake

Death Penalty (CCADP) has also decided that economic pressure may be effective where moral suasion has not sufficed: The CCADP has announced an international tourist boycott of the state of Texas, and urges everyone to join in. They ask everyone to visit their international tourist boycott of Texas page at <http://members.tripod.com/ccadp/boycott.htm>. It's well worth looking at.

IRELAND. Gerald Byrne, of Irish Action Against the Death Penalty, has given notice that his group will also organize a boycott of Texas, which executes more people than any other U.S. state. The boycott covers travel to Texas, as well as goods and services from companies which have their headquarters or a substantial presence in the state. Prime candidate is, of course, petroleum giant Exxon/Mobil (Esso brand).



JOIN JERICO - THE MEETING SCHEDULE IS:

Jericho will meet on the first Monday of each month at 5:00 PM, at either the Student Union or Culture Center on the UN-L campus. We'll post specific information on meeting rooms).

EXCEPTION! In January we'll meet on January 25 at 5 PM at the UN-L Student Union, in the fireplace room.

Thereafter, the dates are: Feb. 1, Mar. 1, Apr. 5, May 3, June 7, July 5, Aug. 2, Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1, Dec. 6.

MONDO AND ED AND JERICO (cont. from p. 2)
 California prison with AIM activist Leonard Peltier, urged the crowd to fight for Political Prisoners in Nebraska, and around the world.

Ferguson invited Nebraskans to join the growing network of informed people who wish to end the incarceration of Political Prisoners in the U.S., and Lincoln and Omaha activists have joined the Jericho movement, led by Ferguson and Safiya Bukari.

State Coordinator Mary Dickinson has plans for the first months of the year:

February: Jericho will petition the Nebraska Board of Pardons on behalf of local Political Prisoners.

March: Jericho members will call on all activist communities for support at a Pardons Board meeting, when Political Prisoner Mondo we Langa will petition for a hearing.

The plan is for a massive show of support by Nebraskans and others at the Pardons Board hearing, to impress upon hardened Pardons Board members that citizens will no longer stand for the illegal incarceration of African American, Native American and Mexican leadership.

April 24: The National Jericho office has asked each state to send representatives, or otherwise support the Millions for Mumia march in Philadelphia.

June 24-26: Dickinson, along with other members of Region II Jericho, will attend the Free Leonard Peltier Political Prisoner Convention, in Kansas.

For more information contact Tekla or Matt Johnson at (402) 435-3465.



**Now available! The Fourth Edition of
 Can't Jail the Spirit
 A Collection of Autobiographies of
 Political Prisoners**

This 206-page book will show that Ed and Mondo are in the company of over 100 other Political Prisoners who continue to languish in U.S. prisons. **YOU CAN ORDER Can't Jail the Spirit for \$15+\$3 postage from**

**Committee to End the Marion Lockdown
 P.O. Box 578172, Chicago, IL 60657-8172**

YOUR TAX \$ AT WORK (cont. from p. 3)

SOMETIMES IT'S NECESSARY TO DESTROY THE VILLAGE IN ORDER TO SAVE IT. Though the raid was brutal and audacious, it was not unusual. Paramilitary or tactical policing -- law enforcement that uses the equipment, training, rhetoric and tactics of warfare -- is on the rise nationwide. According to a study by sociologist Peter Kraska, there are more than 30,000 heavily armed, militarily trained police units in the U.S. -- and the number of paramilitary police "call-outs" quadrupled between 1980 and 1995.

The tactical buildup has been fueled by fattened drug-war budgets and a wave of federal largesse. Between 1995 and 1997 the Dept. of Defense gave local police 1.2 million pieces of military hardware, including more than 3,800 M16 automatic assault rifles, 2,185 Ruger M14 semiautomatic rifles, 73 M79 grenade launchers and 112 armored personnel carriers (APCs). One tactical outfit calls its APC "mother;" another, in east Texas, has named its APCs "Bubba One" and "Bubba Two."

Nationwide, tactical units have metastasized from emergency response teams into a standard part of everyday policing. SWAT teams that would once have been called in only to handle the occasional barricaded suspect now conduct routine drug raids like that at King/Garvey... "The fundamental problem with the SWAT model is that if police become soldiers, the community becomes the enemy," says Sacramento State University sociologist Tony Platt, one of the first scholars to analyze the rise of tactical policing. "Paramilitary policing erodes the idea of police as public servants subordinate to community needs..."

TACTICAL FUTURE "It's a war," Sgt. Margaret Mims of the Fresno Sheriff's Dept. says. In the name of crisis management, the Fresno Violent Crime Suppression Unit (VCSU) is free to use aggressive and unorthodox tactics. It's equipped with attack dogs, flash-bang grenades, smoke bombs, tear gas, pepper spray, metal clubs, and "blunt trauma ordnances," essentially beanbags fired from shotguns, designed to daze rather than kill...

For all the agents' science fiction-esque uniforms and state-of-the-art gear, they call up an awful specter from the past. More than anything else, the robocops of the VCSU resemble the "patrollers" of the Old South, the slave-catching militias that spent their nights rousting plantation shacks looking for contraband, weapons, and signs that slaves were planning to escape north...

Big, aggressive SWAT operations like the one at the King/Garvey co-op are becoming more common. From Albuquerque to Miami, tactical teams have repeatedly shot and killed unarmed civilians in the course of botched drug raids. In a recent case in Bethlehem, Pa., a SWAT team killed a suspect, then burnt his house down. And thanks to confusion and the overzealous use of flash-bang grenades, tactical officers are increasingly

shooting one another; a case in Oxnard, Cal. is the most recent example.

Parts of this article were adapted from the author's forthcoming book "Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis (Verso).



TORTURE IN U.S. PRISONS (cont. from p. 4)

United States. And the racism that I have witnessed in prison systems in the past 22 years is soul-searing.

When I first went into this work, none of us at the American Friends Service Committee had any idea we would end up in this arena. It is only through international attention that we can even begin as a nation to be honest about the economic and political reasons for U.S. prisons. The massive building of prisons that has occurred in this country certainly isn't about the rate of crime.

Fostering the use of international standards not only gives hope to people such as myself. More importantly, it gives a voice to the otherwise voiceless. Human rights advocates on behalf of prisoners have little recourse in the United States. Prison officials do not have to even listen to us, let alone change practices because of our complaints. It is only through the work of such entities such as the World Organization Against Torture that light can be brought to bear on these issues.

Thank you.



Quotes and Comments on Nebraska's Human Rights Abuses

"Before you make a decision in which the state takes someone's life, a hearing ought to be *pro forma*."

however

"In looking at this case, there were no circumstances under which I would grant clemency."

Secretary of State Scott Moore

"There's not an absolute prohibition from the Catholic Church [against capital punishment]."

NE Gov. Mike Johanns

"I think it's fair to say that although the members of the board may have been fair as each of them saw it, what they did didn't hurt their political careers either."

Don Reeves, father of Randy Reeves

"...given the means at the State's disposal to effectively repress crime by rendering inoffensive the one who has committed it, without depriving him definitively of the possibility of redeeming himself, cases of absolute necessity for [the death penalty] are very rare, if not practically non-existent."

Catechism of the Catholic Church, revised 1997

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Alexander Pope

DEATH IN NEBRASKA (cont. from p. 1)

ing that their elected officials adhere to international standards, and at the very least, declare a moratorium on the imposition of the death penalty, until its fairness has been established; and recognize the human rights agreements the U.S. has entered into regarding Political Prisoners.



Here's What YOU Can Do:

Bring U.S. Human Rights Abuses To the Court of World Opinion.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission oversees the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was ratified by the U.S. Congress during the George Bush administration. In your letter, cite specific abuses, and name names, e.g., Randy Reeves on death row, Gov. Mike Johanns, Attorney General Don Stenberg and Secretary of State Scott Moore consistently approving the death penalty in the face of international covenants; Mondo we Langa refused even a hearing on commuting his sentence, etc.

For death penalty issues write to:

Ms. Asma Jahangir
Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions
131-E/1
Gulbert III Lahore
PAKISTAN

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dba/OJC
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Omaha, NE 68105-3131

For Political Prisoners write to:

Maurice Glele-Adhanhazo
Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism
c/o Center for Human Rights
United Nations
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
Geneva
SWITZERLAND
and
President Nelson Mandela
Private Bag X1000
Pretoria 0001
SOUTH AFRICA

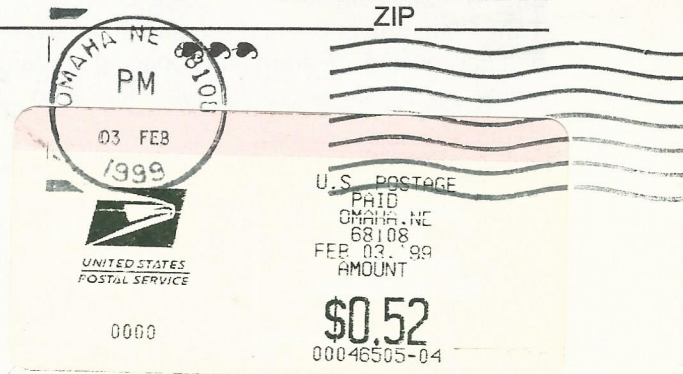


BUFFALO CHIP NEEDS YOUR HELP, TOO!

Many thanks to those of you who have sent checks to help pay for the cost of printing and mailing Buffalo Chip. After this issue, we're almost out of money. Any help would be most appreciated. NOTE: PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO Buffalo Chip, AND MAIL TO 1314 S. 9th St., Omaha, NE 68108. Thanks! YES, I'd like to help. Here's my check for \$_____.

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